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# AN ADDRESS

ON THE

## LIFE, CHARACTER AND PUBLIC SERVICES

OF

### HENRY CLAY,

Delivered on the — day of August, A. D. 1852,

AT WELDON, NORTH CAROLINA,

UPON INVITATION,

BY B. F. MOORE, ESQ.

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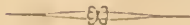
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ADDRESS.



*Fellow-citizens :*

WHENEVER a man ascends in the great affairs of nations far beyond the level of his fellow men, and for a long while maintains, by the rarest attributes of greatness, the high eminence, solitary and unapproachable, the idea insensibly steals into our minds, that Deity has withdrawn him from the lot of mankind and lent him a spark of his own eternity. When such a man dies, the first act of the soul is to doubt the reality, and the next to exclaim, in the language of the eloquent Masillon, as he gazed on the lifeless corpse of Louis the Great : "There is none great but God."

More than eight years ago, by the honored invitation of a great party, I stood near this spot to welcome their head and leader to the hospitalities of the State. *Now*, I stand here by the honored invitation of both the great parties, to commemorate the life and character and public services of the same eminent man. He was *then* the living and formidable representative of a great and active political party; he is *now* the quiet sleeper of the grave, gathered to his fathers in the ripeness of age, and leaving behind him a name of renown to which the united hearts of his countrymen bring their tribute of sorrow and affection, their garlands and their crowns. The type of his being is set for history, and mine is but the task to rehearse its page.

Forty years ago, Henry Clay bore a name of distinction which, even then, had twined itself with the annals of his country. It was a name, not bestowed by position, nor conferred by birth, but gained by the labor of a toilsome ascent; for he was born at the very foot of the lofty eminence on

which he stood at the close of his life. I know, my countrymen, it is not that you are ignorant, either of the humble and obscure years of his youth, or of the distinguished career of his manhood, that I am requested to-day to speak of the man; but that you may have an opportunity, with joint hearts, to hear *again* the record of his patriotism, to bear him your united evidence of his worth, and to pour out, with united hearts, your gratitude to a long life of untiring devotion to his country. You come to approve yourselves worthy of being his fellow-countrymen, and in this, though we do but our duty, we honor ourselves no less than we honor the dead.

Henry Clay was born in the county of Hanover, in the State of Virginia, on the 12th day of April, 1777. In the fourth year of his age, he became an orphan, by the death of his father, who was a Baptist clergyman of respectable ability, and distinguished for his high integrity. He was one of seven children, all of whom, with their mother, had but poverty for their portion, and were destined, of course, to a common toil for their daily bread. In this lowly station he obtained, at an humble country school, the prime rudiments of education. Living for some time as a merchant's clerk in Richmond, he was transferred, at the age of fifteen, into the office of a chancery clerk—then became amanuensis to Chancellor Wythe, and, finally, on the invitation of Gov. Brooke, he completed, under the instruction and hospitable roof of that most worthy gentleman, his legal preparation for the bar. At the age of twenty, having obtained license in Virginia to practice his profession, he removed, in 1797, to the small village of Lexington, Kentucky. During the period he was in the chancery office, and from thence to his removal to the West, he was diligently engaged under the occasional instruction of the Chancellor and Gov. Brooke in supplying his defective education; and he applied himself with great assiduity and success, as is seen by his subsequent life. In his new home he lingered but for a moment at the threshold of business, and when he entered on his career, his ascent was rapid and dazzling beyond comparison, in that region even, where the public witnessed so many brilliant displays from the able lawyers who daily crowded into the inviting country.

Mr. Clay was now in a fair field for the exhibition of his talents. The bar opened to him causes of deep concern, to be determined on the abstruse principles of law—causes of

intense interest, involving the life of the client—and before him and around him opened and lay all that field for popular eloquence which the public affairs of a republican people never fail to present. The action, too, of the Federal Government in the stormy period of 1798, invited an active participation in the discussion of the times; and, from 1797 to 1803, Henry Clay, young as he was, was the favorite popular orator on the great questions, both State and Federal, although not till the latter year, for the first time, was he a member of the Legislature. In this public trust he continued till 1806, when the executive of Kentucky appointed him to the Senate to fill an unexpired term of short duration; but brief as was the term of service in that truly august body, his capacity for business became well established, and he laid, even then, the foundation of a national renown for a commanding eloquence. From the year 1807 to 1810 he was a leading member of the Kentucky Legislature and a warm and principal advocate of the measures of the national administration, which were adopted as retaliatory of British aggressions. In this year (1810,) he was again appointed to an unexpired term of two years in the national Senate. During that time, he took upon himself the defence of President Madison's administration, and, against an extraordinarily able and united array of distinguished men, he won for himself a distinction still higher; and when the term was expired, his name was not only among the first of the great men of America, but was ascending with every new exhibition of his talents and eloquence.

In November, 1811, he took his seat in the House of Representatives, and on the first day of the session, although for the first time a member of that body, he was elected its speaker. The nation was then in a state of feverish agitation concerning our relations with the belligerents of Europe. With abundant cause of war, which had long existed and was constantly recurring, against both the great leaders of the nations of Europe, which France and England divided and embattled in hostile alliance, the struggle arose with us, and a fierce one it was, whether we should strike at all, and, if we struck, whether we should strike our ancient enemy, or our ancient friend. Policy and the feelings of the times selected England for the foe of our arms.

There never was a time, since the peace of 1781, when a war had become so absolutely necessary to the preservation of the national character from abject humility and deep self-



abasement. In the bloody conflicts of Europe for the ten years preceding we had reaped the richest harvests, as we both grew the bread and transported it, and, along with it, the numerous other wants of war, for a world in arms.

The skittish fear of a public debt—an apprehension that we might endanger the consolidation of the recently formed union, and a doubt, that our undisciplined yeomen might not sustain the national character in a conflict in arms with trained veterans of protracted wars—repressed the popular ardor for revenge. A spirit of tameness had come drowsily over the public counsels, which seemed to have surrendered, for the moment, the honor of the nation to whatever interest might be the ascendant of the hour; and under the influence of the vast gains gathered by our citizens, and the prospect of still greater, which lay before them, the national character was in danger of falling into the ignoble guardianship of an avarice, pampered by peace and stimulated by repeated submission.

It was at the moment when Mr. Clay first entered the popular branch of Congress, that the mild and amiable and just Madison acknowledged that a crisis was at hand, which involved the safety and honor of the people and the government, and demanded the atonement of blood. As, in the hands of the speaker, lay the appointment of the committees, through whom the administration was to be both reflected and defended, the elevation of Mr. Clay to that post, over the old and the experienced—over such men as Lowndes and Calhoun, at such a critical time in public affairs—was a high compliment indeed; but *then* justified by the judgment of the past, and *now*, by the history of the future of that day. The elevation of Mr. Clay, with his courageous heart, and lofty national spirit, which he breathed in his public speeches, conjointly with the presidential recommendation to augment the army and navy, announced the near approach of hostilities with that nation with whom, of all others on earth, a struggle in arms was most likely to try the depth of our purse, and the constancy of our courage.

Admitted to be, as England was, the unquestioned mistress of the seas, the counsel was strong and plausible, indeed, that every thing which she could fire at on the ocean, should be withdrawn from that element. In a speech, remarkable for its calmness of courage, and thorough acquaintance with the resources and bravery of the country, which was delivered in January preceding the war, he said: "I am

far from surveying the vast maritime of Great Britain with the desponding eye with which other gentlemen behold it. I cannot allow myself to be discouraged at the prospect of even her thousand ships. The country only requires resolution and a proper exertion of its immense resources, to command respect and to vindicate every essential right."

The nation yet paused before rushing into a contest with the Leviathan of the deep—paused in the hope of awaking in British counsels the slumbering angel of peace—but paused in vain. In April, 1812, an embargo was laid, with the avowed purpose to follow it in a suitable, but short time, with a manifesto of war. On that occasion Mr. Clay spoke to his countrymen in the same language of encouragement. "I approve of it," said he, "because it is to be viewed as a direct precursor to war." And when he had depicted the insults and injuries which we had sustained, he said: "I am not at all alarmed at the want of preparation; there is no terror in the war, except what arises from its novelty. As an American and member of the House, I feel proud that the executive has recommended the measure."

In June war was declared. Of the many causes of war, Mr. Clay always regarded that the most serious, of impressing our seamen; who were sometimes seized for this purpose on our own vessels, under pretence that they were subjects of the crown. In January, 1813, on a proposition to increase the army, he delivered an oration, which, for its timely effect in arousing the nation to a proper sense of its wrongs, and as a lasting monument of the power of argument and impassioned eloquence over the hearts of men, had no equal during the war. "If," said he, "Great Britain desires a mark by which she can know her own subjects, let her give them an ear-mark. The colors that float from the mast-head should be the credentials of our seamen." "We are told that England is a proud and lofty nation, which, disdainingly to wait for danger, meets it half way. Haughty as she is, we once triumphed over her, and, if we do not listen to the counsels of timidity and despair, we shall again prevail. In such a cause, with the aid of Providence, we must come out crowned with success; but if we fail, let us fail like men, lash ourselves to our gallant tars, and expire together in one common struggle, fighting for **FREE TRADE AND SEAMEN'S RIGHTS.**"

On the assembling of Congress in May, 1813 Mr. Clay was again placed in the chair of the speaker. The fortune

of war, which in the beginning had deserted our standard, had now returned to bless our arms, and both ocean and land bore aloft, and in triumph the banner of our country.

A prospect of peace now shone out on the troubled clouds of strife, and the government was as ready to vindicate its character for mercy, as it had been, its claims for justice. Mr. Clay was appointed on the responsible commission to adjust the matters of complaint, and terminate the national dispute. Since the treaty of peace that followed the war of the Revolution, there has not been a negotiation more difficult or complicated. Mr. Clay bore in it a primary part, and displayed throughout its tedious details, masterly tact, and that marked decision in action, which, more than any other man, he could happily unite with proper concessions.

The treaty of Ghent, by high authority in England, was an American triumph.

The close of the war of 1812 may be justly regarded as finishing the first chapter of the national public life of Henry Clay. It fills a period of five years, and left him in the thirty-eighth year of his age, renowned for wisdom as a statesman, and for unrivalled eloquence as an orator. The splendid success of his country, led by his counsels and his energy, had subdued his opponents, and he stood the wonder of the times, and the idol of his countrymen. The voice which had charmed away the fears of the nation, and committed it to the hazards of war, then regarded by many as the voice of the syren enticing her deluded captives to death, was now remembered as the lofty tones of an inspired patriotism, lending courage to the timid, resolution to the wavering, and ardor and confidence to all. What a proud moment was this for him, who, in the most difficult and trying hour of his country, had climbed the lofty eminence of fame, and without a crime to remember on the wayside, could look back along his ascending footpath into the vale below, where, a few years before, he had stood the indigent orphan, hid from the world by obscurity and poverty. And what a proud moment, too, for that country whose institutions had cheered him as he arose, and, for every honor which she bestowed, had received back the bright blessings of a vindicated flag, of peace, prosperity, and national renown.

The cup of ordinary fame had now been full, but that of Mr. Clay had received but a drop of its destined portion.

The establishment of peace removed all impediment to



the forward march of the country, and opened wide the doors for every pursuit which enterprise might venture to enter. But the scene around us was changed indeed.

During the ten years preceding our manifesto of hostilities, the continent of Europe, her islands and her oceans, had been troubled and darkened with the storms of war. The few respites in the drama of blood were but the pauses of a tempest too furious to last long, without renewing the energy of its violence. But *we* were in the midst of sunshine. Withdrawn as *they* were from the arts of peace to swell the array of war, or supply the waste of its carnage, they left want at home, and created famine wherever they marched. At the moment *we* put on the armor of battle, we were the growers or carriers of the bread and comforts of more men in arms, than, at one time, had ever been marshalled on earth.

But when peace returned to *our* doors again, the clangor of arms had become also hushed over *Europe*, and her millions of fighting men had returned to their homes, and resumed the arts of industry in the field and in the workshop. Such was the mighty change on the face of things. That it was to be attended with great results—results as lasting as might be the cause of the change—was foreseen by the most eminent men of the time.

During the war, and for several years before, the scarcity of manufactured articles had stimulated into employment, in the fabrication of the comforts of life before supplied by the old world, many millions of capital. During hostilities they had been, except what had been smuggled from England, our sole reliance for clothing and munitions of war.

To such an extent were our citizens deprived, amid the suspension of commerce, of the usual comforts of living, that many were made advocates of peace long before we had attained the objects of war. Without manufactures of her own, it was evident that the nation must ever be dependent on commerce to fetch the articles needed, and on a foreign demand for the productions of the soil as the means of their payment. In war the commerce would be cut off, or greatly restricted; and, at all times, the demand for the productions of the soil would be uncertain and fluctuating. The infancy of the manufactures already established, was too tender for self-sustentation. Without the protecting hand of government, it was admitted that they could not survive the shock of a long continued rivalry, stimulated by the avarice

of monopoly, and backed by the vast capital of England. If they were now abandoned to their fate, there was little likelihood, that, in another war, men might be found mad enough or patriotic enough, to repeat the desperate experiment.

To be without money to purchase a soldier's blanket, is a fearful weakness in the sinews of war; but to be without the means to make the blanket, is a weakness incomparably greater.

Upon the Congress that followed the ratification of peace, devolved the determination of this interesting subject; and fortunate it was for our country, that the men who had supported the war with their counsel and eloquence, and cheered it to its close, were in that Congress. Mr. Clay, on his return from Europe, was elected to the house of representatives, and he met there from the South, Lowndes and Calhoun, Cuthbert and Lumpkin, Mason and Philip P. Barbour, and the distinguished men from the North and the West, who had stood gallantly by his side in the day of past trial. Aided by the recommendation of President Madison, *the leaders of the war party of* —, settled the question of our independence of England forever.

Though the war had closed in triumph, and had elevated both the spirit and fame of the country, it left our national debt one hundred and twenty millions, and the national finances in a ruinous derangement. The banks were in a state of suspension, without prospect of resumption; for the unusual demand for the comforts and luxuries of life, so long withheld by the interruption of commerce, now created an incessant and exhausting drain of the precious metals to discharge the foreign debt contracted for their supply. Europe had reconstructed her granaries on the fields of war, and she fed her artisans with the produce of her soil, and manufactured for the wants of the world. The banishment of the metals left no medium but a paper, depreciated, even at the great marts of trade, at rates ranging from five to thirty per cent. In this the duties were collected, and when brought into the national treasury and reduced to the standard of value, operated as discriminations, in or out of the favor of importers, to the full extent of depreciation. The revenue ceased to be certain, and taxation became unequal. In the opinion of Mr. Madison, the time had come, when it was the constitutional duty of Congress to select some means to equalize the duties, and to collect and disburse, without loss, the national revenue. His long experience in public affairs, and a judgment, ripening as he advanced in life, sug-

gested as *the means* necessary and proper to carry into execution the injunctions of the constitution upon these subjects, a national bank; and he recommended it. Mr. Clay, with a large majority of the republican party, both in and out of Congress, gave the measure his support. In the space of five years he had changed his judgment of the constitutionality of the measure. On a bill introduced in 1811, to renew the charter of the bank established in 1791, among many grounds of opposition, he had assumed that of its unconstitutionality; and his speech on the occasion, is truly a great and eloquent production. It is the solitary change, in a public life of nearly half a century, in his judgment on great constitutional questions. In making it he changed with the country, and did but follow the example of Madison—that purest of public men, whose part, in the formation and advocacy of the constitution, was larger by far, than that of any other sage of the convention. There is, it is true, a high moral beauty in consistency, because it indicates a settled foundation in principle—but perfection is the attribute of God only.

I know but little difference, in the practical usefulness to our species, between *him*, who is too proud, or too obstinate to reform an erroneous opinion, and *him*, whose opinion is not worth the change. It had been proper for Mr. Clay, and it would have been in unison with the fearless frankness of his nature, to have avowed the change though the consequence had been a derogation from his elevated position.

As a member, he might have been silent on the floor; and as the speaker of the house, without the privilege of a vote, he might have left his opinions unknown, and avoided the charge of inconsistency. But *such* was not *the man*. He then said in a speech of great power: “I know the safest course for me, if I pursued a cold calculating prudence, is to adhere to that opinion right or wrong. I am perfectly aware, that if I change or seem to change it, I shall expose myself to some censure; but I prefer to the suggestions of the pride of consistency, the evident interests of the community, and I have determined to throw myself upon its candor and justice.”

As the best fiscal agent of the government, and the necessary instrument to regulate the exchanges of trade between the several States of this widely extended confederacy, Mr. Clay was thenceforward the decided advocate of a National Bank; and he never ceased his exertions to preserve it at all times, till the attainment of the object became hopeless.

In 1811, nothing had occurred to demonstrate the inadequacy of State Banks to administer the fiscal affairs of government; and, believing that a National Bank was not the means most fit, he thought it, therefore, unnecessary, and of course unconstitutional. In 1816, the substituted fiscal arrangement had disappointed public expectation, and proved its utter inaptitude to the duties imposed. Instructed by the lessons of the past, he returned to the path of a precedent, which, in the outset of the confederacy, had snatched the national credit from the verge of bankruptcy, and for a period of twenty years, had sustained it by the prudence and wisdom of its operations. In 1832, when it was proposed to continue the charter of the bank of 1816, the lessons of experience had redoubled their force; the currency was sound, the instrument had been faithful to its destination, and the exchanges between the most distant parts of the Union fell generally below one-half of one per cent. Believing that these blessings would be endangered by the adoption of the experiment then recommended, of substituting again the banks of the States, he earnestly advocated the renewal of its charter, and predicted, on the failure of the measure, with the fidelity of a history written of the past, the scenes of afflicting bankruptcy, distress, and the astounding commercial revulsion, which were subsequently suffered by the people and the government during the four years which followed its downfall.

Of all the great measures of policy which employed the labors and intellect of Mr. Clay, that stands foremost of encouraging the domestic manufactures of the country. It was, perhaps, the earliest of his convictions on any national topic, so extended in its effects on the welfare of the country. In embracing it as the means of national defence, national wealth and individual comfort, he appears to have consulted little besides his own enlightened observation, and to have drawn his arguments from a close inspection and examination of all the pursuits of life. The ingenious speculations of political economists, maintaining adverse theories with equal plausibility, and with a most puzzling perplexity, had small place in his esteem. On this subject, so profoundly studied, with a thorough and ripe knowledge of all that made up its material, he was a great master himself. His speeches on the policy, exhibit a devoted attention, both to its general propositions and to its details; and those who have read them, in the times of party, but to answer or condemn them, will be amazed if they should study them in an hour of im-



partial reflection, devoted to the enquiry for truth, to find how free are his opinions from the sophisms and paradoxes, with which they have been charged.

The principles on which he based the expediency of introducing a system of a home supply of manufactures essential to the wants of the government and people, were these :

*As to the wants of government :* Every nation, in order to be independent, must have, in peace, the elements of efficient defence ready for a season of war. A marine for the ocean, an army for the land and materials on hand, or readily procured, to augment the force of both ; and equally essential it is to provide raiment for the men, munitions of war, tools to construct and cordage and canvass for the equipment of the fleet.

At the expense of the public purse we kept up, in anticipation of hostilities, an army, a navy and a costly institution for the instruction of youth in the art of war ; and if this forecast was wise enough to justify the annual expenditure of millions, it was the office, too, of a wise precaution to provide, in time of peace, *artisans* to complete, in the hour of need, the efficiency of the national defences.

*As to the wants of the people :* He denied not, but admitted, that the first operation of protection would be an enhancement of price. Thirty-two years before his death, in a public speech, he said :

“ Present temporary inconvenience may be well submitted to for the sake of future permanent benefit. If the experience of all other countries be not utterly fallacious—if the promises of the manufacturing system be not absolutely illusory, by the competition which will be elicited in consequence of a parental care, prices will be ultimately brought down to a level with that of the foreign commodity. In a scheme of policy which is devised for a nation, we should not limit our views to its operation during a single year. We should look at its operation for a considerable time, and in war as well as in peace.”

Nor did he deny, but admitted, that by withdrawing a portion of the population from the pursuits of agriculture there would be a less quantity of the productions of the soil to be exported abroad ; but he contended, that as there was an excess beyond consumption, new markets were demanded ; and that as to the staple of the South, the spindles and looms for its fabrication would be augmented, its consumption increased

and its growth encouraged; and so by the manufacture of cotton and of wool—of the implements, munitions and necessities of war—of iron and steel into machinery and tools, the independence of the country of foreign supply would be consummated, the labor of agriculture would be rewarded, every branch of production increased, and, by the competition elicited, the comforts of life would become plentiful and cheap. The precious metals would cease to be drawn away to fill up the balance of trade; the currency would be kept sound, and the nation, always prepared for war, would feel her strength, command her peace and maintain her dignity and rank among the powers of the earth.

Such were the high expectations which Mr. Clay, in 1820, announced for the country, at no distant day, by the adoption of the system of home manufactures. But he gave no promise that they should be showered on a sudden. Need I ask, whether he did not live to see them all bless his country, and, increasing progressively, expand their beneficence over the whole land, disturbed seriously but once, and then in the period which intervened between 1836 and 1842—a period embraced by the compromise of 1833, and equally remarkable for a great derangement of the currency.

It was a principle of his system, that its introduction should be step by step, as recommended in 1791 by Mr. Jefferson.

In 1820, he said: "Friendly as I am to the existence of domestic manufactures, I would not give to them unreasonable encouragement by protecting duties. Their growth ought to be gradual, but sure."

It was a further principle of that system, announced by him in 1833, that, after the accumulation of capital and skill, the manufacturers would "stand alone, unaided by government, in competition with the imported articles from any quarter of the world."

Finally, it was an additional principle of the system to prohibit the importation of *nothing* by protection, but, in imposing the duties laid for revenue, to adjust them so as to afford incidental protection to our own home industry.

Under the fullest conviction that the policy was sound, for the reasons already stated, it became with him the greater favorite, because it countervailed the restrictions imposed on our trade by the commercial nations of Europe, and especially by her whose aim, for the last century, has been, without change to the right or to the left, "to rule the waves."

In the details of a policy, including such a number of articles, it had been the work of more than human wisdom to have struck, in all, the proper rate of duty. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise, that, with many, there has been much dissatisfaction with particular parts; nor that, with some, the dissatisfaction, at first but partial, should eventually have become so exasperated, as to end rashly, in a condemnation of the whole, as a system.

It is not my purpose, on this occasion, to defend the policy, but to state it; and, in justice to Mr. Clay, to state it, precisely as by him it was advocated. Nor is it my purpose to claim for him either the introduction or the continuance of the policy. History has not assigned to him the instrumentality of inducting it into the councils of the nation; and there have been too many great men, whose renown will descend along with his to posterity, who have participated with him in the work of its continuance, ever to allow his eulogist to claim for him, singly, the merit of Americanizing the policy.

There was, certainly, no warmer or truer friend, than himself, to the measure; but there were those who seemed to be not as ready to yield their convictions of its benefits to quiet the distraction of the country. Mr. Dallas and Mr. Webster, Mr. Adams and Mr. Benton, all refused their support to his reductive measure—the compromise act of 1833.

During the disturbances in Europe, occasioned by the wars of Napoleon, the Spanish provinces of South America, led by our example, availed themselves of the embarrassment of the crown of Spain, and severed the tie of dependance on the mother country. For many years previous to 1818, the insurgents had maintained their independence under regularly constituted governments; but no people, yet had taken them by the hand of fellowship, and acknowledged the legitimate and full existence of their government. In that year, Mr. Clay, believing that the time had arrived, when, without any infringement of the wise and just policy recommended by Washington, and followed by his successors, against intervention in internal affairs of other nations, proposed to recognize them, as separate and independent people.

His speech on the occasion, so far exceeded even *his* great fame as an orator, as to astonish his intimate friends, not less than the nation. Its recitals of the wrongs inflicted on the vassalage of the colonies stir the heart almost to madness. It was universally read over both divisions of this western hemisphere. In Mexico, and in the great plains which de-

scend from the foot of the Andes to either ocean of the world, it nerved the struggling cause of freedom. And it is remembered to this day, wherever may survive a soldier or a patriot of the war, in which the bloody Morillo led the armies of Spain.

The measure was not adopted. A cautious policy preferred a tardy, rather than, premature action in a matter of such delicacy, lest the country might be subjected to the suspicion of imitating the then recent propagandism of France. The discussion, however, awoke the public mind to examine the subject; and, in four years after, the country, acting on the principles on which he had predicated his advocacy of the measure, recognized the sister republics of the South, as governments independent, *de facto*.

Circumstances recently transpiring in the very heart of this Republic, involving the doctrine of intervention, and subjecting Mr. Clay to very unkind criticisms because of a supposed variance between his late opinions and those avowed in that speech, demand, in justice to him and to the country, that his doctrines should be clearly defined and understood. I shall do it in his own language; and though it may prolong my hour, the times, no less than his own great fame, will pardon the privilege. In that speech he says: "I am no propagandist. I would not seek to force upon other nations our principles and our liberty, if they do not want them. I would not disturb the repose even of a detestable despotism. But if an abused and oppressed people will their freedom; if they seek to establish it; if, in truth, they have established it, we have the right, as a sovereign power, to notice the fact, and to act as circumstances and our interest require." "It is not necessary for their interests, it is not expedient for our own, that we should take part in the war. All they demand of us, is a just neutrality. It is compatible with this pacific policy—it is required by it, that we should recognize any established government. Recognition alone, without aid, is no just cause of war." "We have constantly proceeded on the principle that the government *de facto* is that we can alone notice. Whatever form of government any society of people adopts, whoever they acknowledge as their sovereign, we consider that government or that sovereign as the one to be acknowledged by us. We have invariably abstained from assuming a right to decide in favor of the sovereign *de jure*, and against the sovereign *de facto*. This is a question for the nation, in which it



arises, to determine. I do not maintain that every immature revolution, every usurper, before his power is consolidated, is to be acknowledged by us; but that as soon as stability and order are maintained, no matter by whom, we always have considered, and ought to consider, the actual as the true government."

These are the sentiments which he so ardently desired to repeat once more in the Senate, before he died.

In the year 1819, Missouri applied for admission into the Union as a State. The application became the occasion of the most intense national excitement ever witnessed in the country. As the name of Mr. Clay has been so long connected, in the popular mind, with the incidents which attended the progress and disposition of the questions which then arose, it would be unpardonable, on such an occasion as this, either to pass the subject in silence, or to bestow on it a bare allusion.

Missouri was the first portion, after the State of Louisiana, of the vast acquisition of territory by purchase from France, which sought entrance into the Union. On presenting herself, a provision was attached to the bill for her admission, prohibiting the introduction of slaves, and declaring that all children of slaves already introduced, born thereafter, should become free on attaining to the age of twenty-five. It was passed by the House of Representatives, but the condition was stricken out by the Senate. The House refused to concur, and the Senate to recede; and, in this alarming state of affairs, Congress adjourned.

In the interval between that time and the re-assemblage of Congress, the entire Union became inflamed to the highest degree. Popular addresses, inflammatory appeals, legislative resolves and instructions, throughout the Republic, engaged and exasperated the feelings of men. When Congress assembled, the members, coming from a heated furnace of popular passion, renewed the discussion with redoubled warmth and resentment. North was arrayed against South by a strict geographical line; and the most anxious apprehensions were entertained of the result. The occasion was, indeed, painfully interesting. Never, since the formation of the constitution, was there so much need of the presence and influence and conduct of a statesman. Mr. Clay, who was of ardent nature himself, and prone to press his own views with animated zeal, had often seen, without alarm, the hasty spark flash, and die away of its own combustion; but

now he saw the flash turn to living coal, and grow fiercer the more it burnt. For the first time in his life, he threw himself into the midst of a conflict raging between his countrymen, as the mediator in their resentments; and, without the smallest sacrifice of his opinions on the constitutional rights of Missouri, he breathed over the House so effectually his own glowing patriotism, that, for the time, he stilled the angry elements of faction, and allayed the demon of discord.

Having imbued the House with a spirit of conciliation, he next, with the tact of an accomplished negotiator, recommended, in lieu of the distateful condition, the harmless provision that her constitution should "*not be repugnant to the constitution of the United States.*" The bill became a law, and nothing remained, as was then supposed, but to pass on the question, when her constitution might be presented to Congress, whether it was republican. There being no need, in that instrument, to say a word of slavery, the admission was deemed to be settled.

In the summer of 1820, she adopted a constitution, and inserted therein a provision *excluding free negroes from the State.*

At the convening of Congress in December, 1820, the constitution was presented to Congress for approval, when the smothered and pent up fires again burst forth in a rage wholly unequalled by the previous flame; its violence and heat were too great for a while to allow any man to attempt its extinction; but the eyes of the nation, and the calmer part of Congress, were directed towards him who, just before, had so skilfully extricated the nation from its danger. He came to the rescue; *and it was well understood at the time, that he came to the rescue of the Union!* Upon his motion the whole subject was referred to a select committee of thirteen, of which he was chairman. On the 10th of February, 1824, he made an able report, concluding with a resolution of admission into the Union, on condition *that she should never pass any law inhibiting any persons who might be citizens of any other State, from coming into her own.* In committee of the whole it was rejected, but it passed through the House to its last reading, when, on a sudden, the torch was lighted again into the fiercest blaze, and it was lost by a majority of three votes. On the next day a motion to reconsider was carried, and again it was debated with unparalleled acrimony and rancour of feeling. Never, but on one occasion besides, did Mr. Clay stand forth so pre-emi-

nently great—so far above the other men of the day. All his masterly powers of argument, all his magic pathos of manner, of voice, of seductive persuasion, were displayed to the House. But they were displayed in vain. The resolution was lost.

Many there were who regarded this as the last effort which could be made. During three years, the question had been shaking the country to its centre, but there was, all the time, hope, and there was effort. These seemed now to have been exhausted. No one dared to propose an expedient; and there was a frightful pause, a solemn stillness, such as intervenes between the first great shock and the convulsive conclusion of the earthquake.

But Mr. Clay never despaired of the Republic. A great master of the springs of human action, he was rejoiced to witness the secret fears which betrayed themselves in the whispers and stillness of the scene. He gave no encouragement to hope, but allowed the alarm for the safety of the Union to spread. A respite was necessary for the settling of the infuriated emotions of a faction, hardened against the impulses of patriotism, and blind to the saddest havoc of its hands.

After the danger had been surveyed and acknowledged, Mr. Clay once more attempted the settlement of the engrossing controversy. The whole matter, at his suggestion, was referred to a select joint committee, who, submitting themselves to his guidance, reported the resolution before rejected, and it was adopted by a majority of six.

Thus was settled, the first time it occurred, in favor of the South, of free government, and, I believe, of the Union, a question which, in principle, began with the adoption of the Constitution and, twice since, has made its alarming appearance, at the precise interval of thirty years in distance of time.

I have taken the more pains to present, in detail, the case of Missouri: First, to shew the real danger of introducing this question into our national councils, and, therefore, the duty of the patriot to avoid it by every honorable means; next to encourage every lover of the Union never to despair of its integrity, however strong and persevering may appear to be the fanaticism of the hour, and, lastly and mainly, it belongs to this discourse, because it not only sheds immortal renown on Mr. Clay, but illustrates the closing labors of that salvation of his country, which brought him to his tomb, crowned the devotion of his long life to his country, and buried him in the hearts of his countrymen.

Just twelve years after the signal service of Mr. Clay in the admission of Missouri, a second occasion in the order of his life demanded his talents, under extraordinary circumstances, to prevent a collision between one of the States and the Federal Government. The tariff of 1828 was made the pretext for certain State action on the part of South Carolina, which had for its object to exclude the law from operation within her territory. At the election of Mr. Adams, in 1825, Gen. Jackson had promulgated against Mr. Clay a charge so deeply affecting his character, public and private, that, in the language of the latter, an "impassable barrier" was placed between them. In 1828, Gen'l Jackson was elected President by an overwhelming vote, on the ticket with Mr. Calhoun for Vice President, and, in a brief space of time, the President found cause, satisfactory to himself, to cast Mr. Calhoun from his friendship and confidence. An angry correspondence between them left, in the bosom of each, the most embittered feelings.

Mr. Clay was not in Congress at the enactment of the tariff of 1828, and disapproved many of its high duties. The discontent of South Carolina grew so loud, that he introduced a bill revising the whole system of duties, and diminishing them very materially, and it became a law in July, 1832. The measure, however, did not satisfy South Carolina, and produced not a moment's pause in the prosecution of the extraordinary and unprecedented mode of relief which she had devised for the occasion; which was nothing less than to abrogate within her borders as much of the entire law imposing duties as might not seem, in her single and exclusive judgment, conformable to the Constitution of the Union. The more securely to effect her purpose, she exacted an oath of all the civil officers of the State to execute the ordinance of nullification. At the same time she seemed to assume an attitude of defiance, by arming her citizens and providing munitions of war. A day was assigned for the suspension of the Federal authority, and the execution of the ordinance. That day was the first day of February, 1833. As the fated day was approaching, the Executive procured the passage of an act, which invested him with the strongest military power. A proclamation from the President announced his determination to enforce the laws of the Union, with the military force of government, and that he would treat all combinations for resistance of the laws, accompanied with an overt act, as actual rebellion. South Carolina



thundered back her counter-proclamation: the issue was joined. Oaths had been taken impelling each party to the execution of his declared purpose. The military of the U. States occupied the port of Charleston, and South Carolina was mustering her citizens into the field. Brave words had been spoken on both sides; and those who knew Gen. Jackson, knew that, with power to do, he would do what he said he would do. Besides, he came into the executive chair with an open pledge, both by vote and by letter, to sustain a decided protective policy, and every tariff of which she complained had been enacted and sustained by Congresses of his political friends.

The prospect of civil war was before us, and we counted the days as it came nearer and nearer. The apprehension of so great a calamity produced an excitement too deeply intense and painful for utterance. In the dead hour of the night, the rapid footfall of the express horse, bearing his rider along our roads, with secret dispatches to and from the seat of government, fell on our ear, as the omen of a vast and undefinable catastrophe.

In this troubled night of perplexity, and without expectation by the country, our erring sister postponed the final day, and so placed herself in the position of being impelled by a sense of shame to execute, at the second appointed hour, her rash purpose, or become the subject of taunt and ridicule.

To whom, fellow-citizens did the nation now look for the delivering of that sister from the jaws of a most critical peril? The President, powerful as he was among his countrymen, had lost, by his quarrel with the idolized statesman of South Carolina, and by the sarcastic tone of his able and timely proclamation, the position to mediate acceptably; in fact, the attitude of the Executive was such, that advances by him would have been treated as weakness and irresolution of purpose, and, cost what it might, Gen'l Jackson was never the man to tread backwards. On the other hand, Mr. Calhoun would have considered it an act of humiliation, both in himself and his State, of which he was the proud and sole exponent, if South Carolina should fall back an inch.

In this interesting moment, full of imminent danger, and demanding coolness, tact, patriotism of the highest order, and the confidence of the country, Mr. Clay, upon whom now the eyes of all men were cast, stepped between the Government and the State, and saved the one from both rebellion and dishonor, and the other from the dire necessity of applying

the extreme and abhorred, and, possibly, fatal remedy of the sword. He saved, too, the policy of fostering our domestic industry, which, under the influence of a panic, or, in the dreadful convulsions of civil wars, was likely to be utterly destroyed or seriously disturbed for a great length of time.

His plan was extremely simple, and, considering, that the stake was the peace of the country, was both plausible and wise. The injury to the country, the capitalists and the operatives, if injury should ensue, by the gradual reduction of duties, would be gradual also; thus avoiding a sudden crash and allowing each interest time to retreat with all the security which experience and forecaste could provide, and, at the same time, allowing, too, an opportunity for the sobering operation of years on the judgment of men, and, above all, affording a period, wherein might be seen (if such a result would follow) the prosperity of the country increase as foreign trade grew freer from the burthen of duties and expelled our own fabrics from a living competition with the fabrics of a world, greatly surpassing us in capital, superior in skill, and laboring daily for the reward of a daily bread.

The history of this experiment has been too recently drawn into partizan conflict to secure an impartial decision on the point, whether the period of time from 1833 to 1842, with its accompanying disasters to the revenue and the currency and of individual bankruptcy, was affected or not, in its unhappy incidents, by that measure of conciliation, or by the worthless currency which sprung into existence, or by both causes combined.

More than half the period allotted to a generation of men has passed since the eventful year of 1833. The three great actors in the drama of that day have been gathered to their fathers, and the larger portion, by far, of those I address, know the times only by the tradition of their dangers to the Union, to liberty and to all the interests of humanity. This work was emphatically the work of Mr. Clay. While the danger was at its height, Mr. Randolph said: "There is one man, and one man only, who can save this Union. That man is Henry Clay. I know he has the power; I believe he will be found to have the patriotism and firmness equal to the occasion." And when the statesman arose to speak, Mr. Randolph, who had caused himself to be brought to the Senate, in an extremely feeble state, cried out: "Help me up—help me up, I came here to hear that voice."

The two speeches which Mr. Clay delivered on introduc-

ing the bill and in reply to the opposition, are admirable specimens of the finished orator, but nobler far, as specimens of a generous soul, bursting the fetters of party ties and ascending to that elevated atmosphere, where the patriotic statesman, ministering at the altar of his country, lays down, in sacrifice for her peace, much of a long cherished policy, his own mortal injuries, and the embittered feelings of a sensitive and wounded spirit.

The true character of Mr. Clay is perfectly portrayed in those speeches. "There are some," says he, "who say let the tariff go down; let our manufactures be prostrated, if such be the will and pleasure, at another session, of those to whose hands the government of the country is confided; let bankruptcy and ruin be spread over the land, and let resistance to the laws, at all hazards, be subdued. Sir, they take counsel of their passions. No! No! Let us save the country from the most dreadful of all calamities; and let us save its industry, too, from threatened destruction. Statesmen should regulate their conduct and adapt their measures to the exigencies of the times in which they live. They cannot, indeed, transcend the limits of the constitutional rule; but with respect to those systems of policy which fall within its scope, they should arrange them according to the interests, the wants and the prejudices of the people. Two great dangers threaten the public safety. The true patriot will not stop to enquire how they have been brought about, but will fly to the deliverance of his country. The difference between the friend and foes of the compromise under consideration is, that they would, in the enforcing act, send forth a flaming sword. We would send out that also, but, along with it the olive branch, as a messenger of peace. They cry out, the law! law! law! Power! power! power! We, too, reverence the law and bow to the supremacy of its obligation; but we are in favor of the law executed in mildness, and of power tempered with mercy. They, as we think, would hazard a civil commotion, beginning in South Carolina and extending, God only knows where. While we would vindicate the Federal Government, we are for peace, if possible, union and liberty. We want no war—above all, no civil war. No family strife. We want to see no sacked cities, no desolated fields, no smoking ruins, no streams of American blood, shed by American arms! \* \* \*

I have been accused of ambition in presenting this measure. Ambition! If I had listened to its soft and seducing whis-

pers—if I had yielded myself to the dictates of a cold, calculating and prudential policy, I would have stood still, unmoved. I might even have silently gazed on the raging storm, enjoyed its loudest thunders, and left those who are charged with the care of the vessel of state to conduct it as they could. I have been heretofore often unjustly accused of ambition. Low, grovelling souls, who are utterly incapable of elevating themselves to the higher and nobler duties of pure patriotism—beings who, forever keeping their own selfish aims in view, decide all public measures by their presumed influence on their aggrandizement, judge me by the venal rule which they prescribe for themselves. I have given to the winds those false accusations, as I consign that which now impeaches my motives. Yes, I have ambition; but it is the ambition of being the humble instrument, in the hands of Providence, to reconcile a divided people; once more to revive concord and harmony in a distracted land—the pleasing ambition of contemplating the glorious spectacle of a free, united, prosperous, and fraternal people.”

In considering, in one connection, the favorite measure of Mr. Clay's policy, and the prominent incidents growing out of it, I have passed over, in the proper order of events, a most interesting part of his public life. I allude to his candidacy for president of the United States, at the election of 1824, and the post of Secretary of State which he filled under Adams, during his presidential term. From the adoption of the constitution in 1789, to the year 1825, a period of thirty-six years, the chief magistracy of the nation was accorded, with a remarkable unanimity, to the distinguished sages who bore the most conspicuous part in conducting our independence through the stormy period of the revolutionary war, and the no less critical labor of framing the constitution. The year 1824 found the distinguished men of those periods called to their rest, or too much bowed with lengthened years to assume the cares of responsible office. Four men, whose infancy had been nursed amid the dangers of our arms, and whose manhood had won, each for himself, a name of renown, followed close in their wake—John Quincy Adams, William H. Crawford, Andrew Jackson, and Henry Clay—each one a popular favorite—were presented to the people to succeed to the seat, just about to be vacated by the last of the noble line of the patriots of '76. No one having received a majority of votes in the electoral college, the election went, by the constitutional provision, to the House



of Representatives, and Mr. Adams was chosen president. Mr. Clay was offered, and accepted, the appointment of Secretary of State. Every body then knew, every body now knows, his superior qualifications for that distinguished office. Its duties have, at no time, been performed with greater fidelity, and the papers emanating from the department during his service, are among the fine models to be found in that bureau. The administration, however, was most unsparingly assailed, and, mainly, through a charge made against Mr. Clay, that he had bartered his vote in the House of Representatives, for the office of Secretary of State.

The accusation, as soon as made, was met by a prompt and indignant denial, and Mr. Clay demanded of the House, over which he then presided, the fullest investigation, and challenged his accuser to the proof, who avowed himself ready for the trial. A committee was appointed, not a member of whom was his political friend; but the vaunting accuser refused to appear with his proofs; and, for the time, the aspersion sunk into profound silence, where, forever, it had remained buried in that "lower deep" which lies below the "lowest depth," but that it was snatched up, as it was sinking to its destined home, and pressed, without scruple or remorse, into the service of a partizan warfare of extraordinary activity and bitterness.

For the space of two years it circulated, as most widely do all scandals, without proof or a responsible name. In vain did Mr. Clay, wounded to the quick by the calumny, invite an opportunity to confront its endorser. Finally, Gen. Jackson, to whose private conversations many references had been made, as the fountain of the charge, surrendered Mr. Buchanan as his informant. That gentleman, since so distinguished in high public station, immediately, and without any prompting but his position, denied, in the most emphatic terms, that he had made the statement attributed to him, and complained, with some feeling, that he could be supposed capable of acting the corrupt part assigned to him.

Such, and no more, was the foundation on which was rested the imputed foul contract of corruption between Adams and Clay. Mr. Kremer who first uttered it, a simple honest man, and doubtless the mere tool of a curtailed instigator, within twenty-four hours after he had avowed his readiness to prove it, retracted the charge, and, in twenty-four hours afterwards, reaffirmed it, but would never, and

did never, disclose his proof or his witnesses. Mr. Buchanan was the *only* person ever referred to as a witness of the bargain.

After this lapse of time, I know it will be incomprehensible to this generation of men, how a charge, so utterly destitute of testimony to support it, and so much at variance with the frank and honorable character of Mr. Clay, illustrated through a public and private life then thirty years old, could last, not only a day, but extend over a space of fifteen years of his after existence. For, besides the absence of accusatory proof, a dozen men of distinction bore evidence, that before the meeting of Congress, Mr. Clay had declared that, in no event, could he support Gen'l. Jackson, and should vote for Mr. Adams. Among them are now remembered the names of Gen'l. Lafayette, Gen'l. McArthur, Gov. Metcalf and Thomas H. Benton.

Mr. Clay was indebted for the continuance of the calumny to two causes; the one was that Gen'l. Jackson gave to it credit even after his only witness had failed to support it: and the other was, his prominent position and supposed aspiration for the executive chair.

A public retraction by the hero of New Orleans, of the charge made on the supposed relation of Mr. Buchanan, after that gentleman had withdrawn himself as the witness, became no less an act of duty to himself, than of justice to Mr. Clay. If he had misapprehended his witness, he had imprudently, if innocently, done wrong to a gentleman, and if his witness had prevaricated, then his testimony was too unsafe for reliance, and should have been discredited forever. Such, however, was not his view of his duty: and so unbounded was his possession of the confidence and affections of the people, that, his will and his wishes became their law and their pleasure. His suspicions, well founded or delusive, blighted with the destructive power of ascertained truth, and he was aware of it: And the facility with which during his second candidacy, and first term of service, he prostrated public men of renown, astonished both them and the nation.

His power was equally great to extricate, from a long and burdensome odium, those on whom he laid but a finger of favor or protection; and, not content with securing to himself such undisputed supremacy over the minds and fate of his countrymen, while sitting, himself at the helm of affairs, he sought to extend it into the future, and to leave, as he retired, the impress of his feelings as a legacy to the nation.

A word of retraction would have ensured the acquittal of Mr. Clay, but that word died with him, and was buried with him. I know it will be asked if such conduct is consistent with the general frankness of the hero of New Orleans? That personage was remarkable for one quality, above all others; it was the star of his life and of his fortunes—the unvarying principle of his action: *He never retraced his steps.* Although highly impulsive in his nature, and prone to hasty conclusion, in the policy of his measures, he never abandoned his position; in his personal difficulties never conceded an error, and never made an apology in a quarrel—change of purpose knew him not, and compromise was weakness. Warm to blindness, in his friendships, his enemies found no quarter at his hands, but in the impregnability of their position. Open to demonstrations of kindness, and accessible to flattery, he readily bestowed his heart, but the measure of his vengeance fell terribly on those who betrayed or slighted the gift. Justly proud of his achievements in war, he was too sensitive to brook, from a man of distinction, a breath of censure on his fame; and the speech of Mr. Clay on the conduct of the Seminole campaign, was never forgiven. Its strictures will descend along with his deeds, both imperishable alike, in the history of the country.

There are, in the lives of these distinguished men, some points of coincidence, not unworthy to be noted on this occasion. Both, children of the revolution, orphans and penniless—both adopted the same pursuit in life—both quitted the comforts and cultivated fields of their youth, and, without patrons or friends, threw themselves into a wilderness beyond the mountains, to swell the throng of adventurers, commingling together, for the first time, as they sat down in the woods of the west. And both, though summoned by their country to different fields in the war of 1812, became chief in his place, and won, by his services, a monument of gratitude and fame. Both have been idols of their country; but here the coincidence ends.

Groudbless, ungrateful and unjust as was the charge of the bargain, it doubtless, for many years, threw a cloud around the character of Mr. Clay, and deeply affected his popularity, with no inconsiderable portion of his countrymen. It endured too long, suddenly to clear away: and he passed the zenith of his life, with its shadows resting on the broad disc of his sun. The grief of his mighty heart was great indeed; and those who could have pleasure in looking on a brave man struggling

with adversity—a sight, says Addison, worthy the contemplation of the Gods—have seen the noblest which any age may afford. But his courage never forsook him; and in all the dark hour, cheered by his conscience, which never abandons the innocent, he threw his arms around his country, and, with a love which things past, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any living creature could diminish or dim, he gave up his mind and his soul to her service.

His position demanded, in his opinion, a public refutation of the slander, and called forth, on two several occasions, a defence, which, for lofty eloquence, severe analysis, powerful and unanswerable argument, may challenge to the comparison the first specimens of the kind, which have ever been written or spoken; and go down they will to posterity, where, unless the lessons of history be untrue, positions will be changed. He that was the accuser, will become the accused; and happy will he be, if amid the silence of that hall, where sits in just judgment the inflexible judge of the past, unmoved by the voice of adulation or the shout of applause, he may find in his bosom or his tongue, a vindication so eloquent of truth, as that record of defence, which once lay unheeded and buried under his frowns.

With unrivalled power, these compositions exhibit both the exasperation of his griefs, and the testimony of his own bosom.

Speaking of the action of the Senate on his nomination for the bureau of State, he says, every Senator present was silent as to the imputation: "No one presuming to question my honor or integrity: how can General Jackson justify to his conscience or to his country this palpable breach of his public duty! It is in vain to say that he gave a silent negative vote. He was in possession of information, which, if true, must have occasioned the rejection of my nomination. Investigation was alike due to the purity of the national counsels, to me, and, as an act of strict justice, to all other parties implicated." \* \* \* \* "I have never done him, knowingly, any injustice. I have taken pleasure, on every proper occasion, to bestow on him merited praise for the glorious issue of the battle of New Orleans. \* \* \* He has erected between us an impassible barrier, and I would scorn to accept any favor at his hands. I thank my God that He has endowed me with a soul, incapable of apprehensions from the anger of any being but himself."

Then passing to his constituents—the people whose fathers



received him in his indigence, and cheered him onward as he rose to distinction—whose sons had surrounded him with the shield of their confidence and affection in every trial of his life, and had been the more devoted, as the more manifest became his peril—he poured forth a stream of warm gratitude, which could gush only from the fountains of virtue and integrity, melted into kindness. “Throughout the whole of these scenes” (so he concluded before them his matchless defence) “You have clung to me with an affectionate confidence which has never been surpassed. I have found in your attachment, in every embarrassment in my public career, the greatest consolation and the most encouraging support. I should regard the loss of it as one of the most afflicting public misfortunes which could befall me. That I have often misconceived your true interests, is highly probable. That I ever sacrificed them to the object of personal aggrandizement, I utterly deny. And, for the purity of my motives, however in other respects I may be unworthy to approach the throne of grace and mercy, I appeal to the justice of my God with all the confidence which can flow from a consciousness of perfect rectitude.” Despite, however, of every effort of traduction, malice, nor envy, nor ignorance, nor all combined, could obscure altogether the favorite son of Kentucky. But, like the fair queen of the night, beheld from different points by the different nations of the earth, while his enemies saw but the diminished outline of a glory covered in cloud, he turned on his friends, unshorn and serene, the face of a full round orb of light.

The friends of Mr. Clay were not only devoted, but invincible in their attachment. Although overshadowed, by a large opposing majority, they delighted to exhibit every proof of their affection and esteem. No other man has been ever so often presented by his friends for the high office of President; and, although always defeated, there is not a living voter, who does not cherish with exultation and pride the compliment he tried to bestow.

In 1844 they presented his name for the last time. In this canvas, the agencies of his former defeats were but little felt. Those who had ignorantly and innocently imbibed belief in the partizan tale of corruption, surrendered their credulity to the unceasing proof which every succeeding day of his life offered of his manly, noble, and elevated character, which, like a silent, but irresistible flood, had swept the calumny away. His views upon an isolated question of

great public concern, did not accord with the existing sympathies of a large portion of his countrymen. The annexation of Texas had engrossed the public mind, and enlisted its advocacy. Apprehensive that it might be the occasion of war with a neighboring Republic, whose patriotic struggles for liberty had won for her our admiration and attachment ; and that, as a consequence, our country might again be disturbed by the terrible and dangerous storms which he had found it so difficult to allay on the admission of Missouri, he did not hesitate to prefer peace, and the safety of the Union, to an extended domain, in whose acquisition and disposition, both might be endangered.

From the year 1831 to his resignation in 1842, he occupied a seat in the Senate, an open opponent of most of the great measures favored by the administrations of presidents Jackson and Van Buren. In no period of the Republic has there been a more magnificent display of mighty minds, in the simple grandeur of intellect, in the severity of logic or in the power of eloquence. It is emphatically the Augustan age of the Senate. Like the wonderful times which brought together in the parliament of Great Britain a Burke, a Chatham and a Fox, which were seen never before, and witnessed never since, the assemblage in one body, of a Clay, a Webster and a Calhoun, is the event of a chance which centuries may labor, in vain, to reproduce.

“ Nil oriturum aliàs, nil ortum tale.”

Able and eloquent as are many who remain, it is the common feeling of all, that the great lights have been withdrawn from the political firmament.

The efforts of Mr. Clay, during this period, are notable for their able vindication of constitutional liberty, for dispassionate argument and statesmanlike views ; and as a whole, are the most finished productions of his public career.

In March 1842, Mr. Clay resigned his seat in the Senate as he then, confidently expected, forever ; and thus would have terminated his connection with public affairs, but for the exciting and dangerous questions which sprung into existence out of the results of annexation.

Thirty years had now passed since the troubles of the Missouri agitation had been composed into peace ; but their source still remained ; and, though buried beneath a surface of apparent repose, it was not difficult to hear from within the volcano, even when there was sunshine around it, the

distant noise of its explosions : and the smoke which arose, and the fierce blaze which occasionally burst forth, and the murmurs of its wrath suppressed, all, warned the statesman of the earthquake that would follow, whenever the deep fires within should be stirred into a general commotion.

On this subject, no living man of renown had, from the events of the past, drawn deeper lessons of wisdom than Mr. Clay; and no one had so often surveyed, nor more truly appreciated, the magnitude of its dangers.

The conflict had been approaching under the auspices of great and opposing movements. On the one hand, the fanaticism of the North had boldly invaded the halls of legislation with language of menace and insult : on the other, the annexation of Texas, achieved almost in a moment of surprise, not only aroused the sensibility of the fanatic, but awoke the jealousies which so sensitively guard the balance of power. Then came the Oregon proviso, introduced avowedly in the spirit of a wanton assertion of power over the delicate subject. Mutually exasperated by events thus repeated at intervals, with resentments irritated by conventions, and inflamed by violent addresses, the characteristic soberness of a large portion of the American people wholly gave way, and became madened, even to desire a dismemberment of the Union. The threat of greater evils had been borne by the South in the events attending the admission of Missouri, but there was then more patience among the people, and there were, too, yet left among us, the cool and patriotic heads of the venerable Adams and Jefferson, of Madison and Monroe—they who had seen the ship of State, from the laying of the first timber in her keel, assailed by a thousand dangers, and yet *ever* ride gallantly through the difficulties that beset her. *They* then cheered the country with hope, and encouraged her patriots never to despair, but to cling to the last plank which might float on the bosom of the deep, and keep above it the banner of the Union. But their voice was now hushed in the grave, and their example of forbearance served not as a beacon in the tempest.

It was in *this* hour that the great body of the people looked around for their deliverer. No man knew better than did Mr. Clay, the imminence of the danger, and he hastened to return to the councils of his country. It was expected of him. It was his duty; and to know it, was to take no thought of himself, and, straightway, to discharge it.

On this last field of his patriotic labors, he entered in the

74th year of his age. Yet, lithe was his form, and untouched by the hand of time, the erectness of his tall stature. In the purest temper of conciliation, he commenced his pious work, appealing to all in the spirit of patriotism which had led our forefathers through common sufferings of unexampled severity, to a common destiny of liberty and union. The points of difference were stated with clearness and precision, and were divested of all undue and imaginary importance. He showed to both parties that the contest was more a matter of principle, than of practical operation; and that, by forbearing the hand of legislation, the proper interests of each would be protected, and the honor of neither would be sacrificed or sullied. During many months was this subject considered, to the exclusion of all others. It assumed every possible aspect, and was discussed in every shape. Day by day, during this long interval, did Mr. Clay stand up in the Senate to argue the questions as they arose; and, with a masterly and inconceivable knowledge, both general and in detail, that astonished us all, did he meet and discuss every objection, recommending himself, with a pliancy of mind that showed his mastery of the heart, now to the obstinate prejudices of the north, and now to the fiery and uncalculating passions of the South.

The objections to his plans were as opposite as the sections from which they arose, and as various as, in each section, were the differences of opinion; yet was he prepared for them all. In the outset, his prospects of success were gloomy and discouraging, and fearfully foreboded, even, that amid the violence of feeling, his venerable form, nor national renown, nor past services, would secure to him, in his sacred office of mediator, the ordinary courtesies of parliamentary decorum. Still he persevered, yielding every thing to prejudice which might be safely conceded; but, in every matter of substance, remaining firm and unshaken. The immensity of his labors was without a parallel, even in the vigor of his manhood. Buried in his subject, endued with a courage that never faltered, and a hope which never despaired, his eloquence arose to inspiration. Now, it was heard in the seductive accents of gentle persuasion; and now, it invoked the spirits of the departed—of the father of his country, and the companions of his arms and his counsels, till we could almost see them descending to his aid. At one time, it would display a land of unequalled fertility, begirt by the great oceans of the earth, filled with untold millions of freemen,



possessed of the commerce of the seas, with *one* flag for their wars and *one* flag in their peace. Then, with the power of its magic, the picture was changed. The millions of freemen were broken into fragments—their honored flag was torn into insignificant strips, and each little strip bore a lone and faded star. The brazen trumpet of discord was heard blowing loud over land and over sea; and maddened by sectional strife, or led by devouring ambition, or phrensied by fanaticism, clothed in the flames of hell, were seen mustering for the conflict of fraternal blood, their petty navies and infuriated yeomanry.

It was with an affection which tongue may not express, that you, and I, and all of us, beheld that venerable man, with the weight of near fourscore years on his head, again spread out his arms over his beloved land, to shield it from the dangers which came upon it from the North and from the South, and threatened it with violence and destruction. And it was with amazement and awe that we saw him standing by the altar of his country, and, as the perils increased, gathering strength and energy, till he seemed the impassioned and inspired genius of the constitution and the Union, commissioned by the blood of the past and the hopes of the future, to defend them, or, dying by their side, and covered with their pall, to fill with them a common grave. Heaven favored his labors, and he saw the salvation of his country. He saw it and died.

In this magnificent labor, he was the chief actor and the master spirit; but there were others who shared in the labor, the principal of whom was the great Webster, who, in a spirit of self-sacrifice which patriotic minds only can make, has added to the noble title of *expounder of the constitution*, which he gained in the day of its danger, and so worthily wears, the title, no less glorious, and won, also, in the hour of its danger, of *defender of the Union*.

In the year 1799, Mr. Clay was married to Lucretia Hart, a daughter of Col. Thomas Hart, of Lexington, who had emigrated from Maryland. She bore him eleven children, and, at the age of seventy-one years, has survived not only her husband, but most of their children.

Mr. Clay's speeches will ever be read with the deepest interest; they open with the clearness and beauty of the morning, and diffuse, as they proceed, streams of advancing and spreading light, till the reader finds himself in a flood of day. In matter, they are sufficiently copious to furnish to

the reader of the next generation a thorough understanding of the whole subject. His facts are fairly and skilfully arranged for truth and effect; and the structure of his sentences is easy and harmonious; grand in volume, and swelling as it proceeds. His words are selected with care, and dispel all obscurity of idea. Understanding his subject most clearly himself, there is a light in his expression, not dazzling but clear, which leaves nothing dark—no thought half expressed—no opinion in mystery. Argument is the forte of his composition—: the deep sincerity of his convictions, the lucid order of their connection, and the fervor of his patriotism, lie at the foundation of his eloquence.

“Classic in its style,  
Not brilliant with explosive coruscations  
Of heterogeneous thoughts, at random caught,  
And scattered like a shower of shooting stars,  
That end in darkness; no, his noble mind  
Was clear, and full, and stately, and serene,  
His earnest and undazzled eye he kept  
Fixed on the Sun of Truth.”

As an orator, he possessed a combination of many gifts which fall, altogether, to very few men. His tall and graceful form, which stood in repose while the heart was unagitated, was swayed by the deep emotions of his bosom, as a forest tree is rocked by the tempest. With a voice of illimitable compass, distinct in every key, and musical in all its tones, he filled, without effort, the most spacious halls.

His manner, too, was exceedingly fine, and the lineaments of his countenance, catching the contagion of his heart, grew eloquent as he spoke.

With such advantages, added to a charm which none can describe, it is not wonderful that, for the last thirty years, Mr. Clay has been regarded as the most eloquent man in the Union. Without a book to hand down a word of his language, tradition would preserve the fame of his eloquence for centuries to come.

Mr. Clay was decidedly a man of business—laborious, neat, methodical. As a statesman, he was profound, sagacious, just, patriotic, national, and eminently practical.

“In the radiant front superior shone  
The first paternal virtue, public zeal;  
And threw o’er all an equal wide survey.”

No man has arisen, no man can, at any time, arise by the force of his unaided exertions, from so humble an origin to a destiny so exalted as those which begun and finished the career of Mr. Clay, without possessing more than an ordinary share of the intensity of the passions of our species. It is their confluence which constitutes energy—the stream of energy that bears us along with more or less impetuosity, as the same may be found in the tributaries, or as it may be checked and controlled by judgment and education.

Mr. Clay was a man of great warmth of temper, and, many times, was shown its “hasty spark;” and although early withdrawn from parental care, he placed it under the discipline of a judgment pre-eminently remarkable for its practical character. But his temper, though warm, was noble and generous, as is attested by his whole life. The wrongs which he sometimes inflicted in the heat of collisions, he repaired early, and with dignity and grace. Although both brave and firm in an eminent degree, his conduct was governed by no rule of inflexibility, which was not approved by justice and kindness. In public affairs, he was deterred from the performance of his duty by no partiality for friends—by no resentment of his foes. His sense of duty was the only master he obeyed; and, in the service of that, he counted no perils to himself, but freely staked, for the welfare of his country, his reputation in the past, and his expectations in the future. It was this lofty sense of right, impelled by a disposition at once ardent and confident, that gave to his conduct, sometimes, the appearance of dictation.

Mr. Clay carried no malice in his heart. He was too proud, and too just to himself, to seek to appease the anger of those who had injured him; but he was too true to his duty as a man, and the instincts of a noble nature, to pursue them for revenge.

Gratitude was a distinguishing trait in his character. The kindness of Gov. Brooke to him, in his indigence and orphanage, was remembered with a lively recollection to the day of his death; and in all the difficult scenes of his life, that venerable, pure-hearted, and intelligent gentleman, was his confidant and adviser.

The men who knew him best, loved him most. His neighbors—his congressional district—the State of Kentucky, knew no bounds to their love and esteem for his character and fame. In a feeling manner, and in the most honorable place, he has left the eloquent record of *her* devotion and of

his gratitude. In his speech on retiring from the Senate, overpowered with emotion, he spoke thus, of his adopted State: "From the period that I set my foot on her generous soil, the highest honors of the State have been freely bestowed on me; and afterwards, in the darkest hour of calumny and detraction, when I seemed to be forsaken by all the rest of the world, she threw her broad and impenetrable shield around me, and, bearing me aloft in her courageous arms, repelled the poisonous shafts that were aimed at my destruction, and vindicated my good name from every false and unfounded assault."

Happy, honorable State—land of the dark and bloody ground—first born of the American confederacy—ever blest be thy name. Thou deservest to be the land of statesmen—thou, who cried out to him, in the night of his troubles,

"Though all the world betray thee,  
One voice at least thy fame shall guard,  
One faithful harp shall praise thee."

It has been objected that Mr. Clay was ambitious. Ambitious of what? Of destroying the liberty or union of the States? He sacrificed his life to avert that awful disaster. Of what then? Of occupying her highest post of honor? Be it so. And how did he seek that high estate? By petty services and skulking policies? By the adulation of some, and the ruin of others? No, fellow-citizens! No! If that prize was the incentive of his deeds, never did an ambitious man suit to the noble end, nobler deeds. Never can man more dignify, in advance, the object of his ambitious toil. And never, if patriotism, unexampled great services rendered to the country, virtuous purposes and lofty intellect, can justly deserve the prize,—never, will it be more worthily deserved by any one of the thousand, who, I pray God, are yet destined to succeed, by free election, the patriot statesman who now sits at the helm of State.

But, whatever may have been, at other times, his ambitious hopes, or the motives which inspired the illustrious actions of his other days, there is *one* period of his life sacred from the polluting breath of scandal and suspicion. It is fenced around as a shrine—the gift of Deity,—from which, by the permission of God, and in the sight of all his countrymen, he might take his apotheosis.

Yes, fellow-citizens, a kind Providence reserved for him



the last scene of his labors, to bear him eternal testimony of the purity and patriotism of his whole public life. *That* life!—whose sun, so bright as it dawned on the nation, and rose to full view, yet destined, in the ways of Wisdom unfathomable, to wade through storms and darkness, when most we looked for the mid-day blaze, has descended below the margin of the world. But, in the ways of the same Wisdom, the clouds were dispersed as it came down to the close of his day; and, as the shadows were lifted from the pathway he had trod, honor and patriotism emerged to full view as the bright guides of the journey. Worse fate he might have had, as often before him has been the lot of the great benefactors of men.

“Diram qui contudet hydram,  
Notaque fatali portenta labore subegit,  
Comperit invidiam supremo fine domari.  
\* \* \* \* Extinctus amabitur idem.”

That repentant tribute which a nation bestows with the “dull, cold marble,” often not till after death, on her greatest and the best of her men, he was allowed to feel, though late, yet, in the warm bosom of life.

It was the happy fortune of Henry Clay to outlive every blight on his honor, to die in the ripeness of years, and in the plenitude of his fame.

Vindicated in his life by an ordeal of fire, he saw the pen of detraction broken into atoms. The noble character which he left, when he drew his last breath, will be his character for the age that is to come. All that he WAS he IS.

The decline of his day was beautiful and calm, and he gave it up to God, to his friends, and his country. Gradually he sunk to his rest. Grain by grain, dropped away the sands of his life—so slowly and so gently, that he saw them all fall, but the last. As the soul took her flight, his affections, purified for heaven, bore along the holiest memories of the heart, and the tender words of wife and mother were the last sounds that trembled on his lips.





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